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CO-OPERATIVE
COTTAGE PURCHASING.

A PAPER

BY

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other. They spend their whole life, from day to day, month to month, and year to year, pent up in small workrooms, workshops, or factories, where the air is vitiated and impure; and in some cases the very nature of the employment and the materials used tend to make that impure atmosphere still more obnoxious and detrimental to health; and then for these men, who have been fighting all day against such fearful odds, to return to their homes in some locality where the laws of health are utterly disregarded, it must have a tendency to shorten their lives, and make those short lives less enjoyable than they might be under more favourable conditions. I need not enumerate instances or give you statistics. They must be known to you all, but my position is strengthened by the fact that the rate of mortality differs in various parts of the same town, and is always highest in those parts where back courts and alleys most abound. Here then, fellow-co-operators, is a field worthy your best efforts—a field which, if cultivated, will yield a rich harvest of blessing, and one which is too often neglected or ignored by those who build or buy cottage property as a good investment. I ask you to give this view of the question your most serious consideration. A high authority recently stated that, “The improvement in the health of our great centres of population requires the intelligent co-operation of the people as much as the wise action of the local sanitary authorities, for when a knowledge of the causes of disease is more widely diffused among the people they will not long withhold the co-operation necessary to lessen the sanitary defects of their homes.” Dr. Foster does not say what kind of co-operation is necessary; but “the sanitary defects” are often in the situation and construction of houses. We have had too much sentimental benevolence in high places, too much platform philanthropy, and sometimes from the very men who own these hovels, which are the hotbeds of disease. When we begin to talk of things which touch the pockets or interest of the capitalist class, they tell us of the laws of political economy. But let us by our own organisation endeavour to lessen these evils by building cottages for ourselves on the most approved principles, and thus accomplish two great objects at one time—make life and health more enjoyable, and try to put a stop to the hungry greed of the petty landlords

who swarm in all our large towns. It can be done; nay, it is being done by many societies, and with successful results. Leicester, Lincoln, and Derby, among others, have gone into it in earnest, and I will take the latter place as an illustration, not because I think it is best, but because I am most familiar with it; and I must admit it deals with it in rather a novel way. It is not a building society, but it is part and parcel of the distributive society itself.

There is a time in the history of every society when it has to struggle with an insufficiency of capital to carry on its business. This is not always caused by the poverty of the members, but by their not seeing the value and importance of letting their dividends accumulate. Two years ago our capital had so increased that it became imperative we should seek out fresh channels for its reinvestment, so we decided on cottage building. We purchased an estate in the suburbs of the town, formed streets, and set the land out in lots, and as our members applied the land was allotted them on paying a deposit of 10 per cent on its cost. When the plans are made they are submitted to the committee for their inspection, and if approved the money is advanced in instalments as the building progresses. Some members are timid in undertaking the management of building their houses. To meet these cases the society builds say 24, and ballots them among those who have applied for them. We have 140 houses built, besides many in course of erection, although the department has been in operation only 18 months; and these cottages will be the property of those who occupy them, in 19 years, by simply paying the rent. The scale of repayment is 3s. per week for each £100 lent. Some may say 19 years is a long time to wait before you can claim the house as your own; but you would have to "wait a little longer" ere you could claim a single brick from your ordinary landlord. Beside, what is the nature and object of co-operation? Is it not to reach and bless the very poorest in the land? And if the repayments were made to extend over a less period, then they must be proportionately higher, and that might exclude many of our poor members who have to struggle with a large family and a small income. Those who think the time is too long have the opportunity of paying larger amounts, and thus reduce the time over which the repayment is extended. We must give

all the opportunity of enjoying the benefits, and exclude none by reason of the repayments being too heavy. There is another view of this question. While you inhabit a co-operative house you are making the department a savings bank for you, though you might not complete the purchase of the house. Still, all you have paid above the 5 per cent interest is your own. To make this clear: Suppose the house cost £200, the rent—no, we won't have that word—the repayment will be 6s. per week, or £15. 12s. per year. A deposit of 5 per cent, or £10, is required, that being deducted from the cost of the house will leave £190 to be paid, which will stand thus:—

End of	Interest.			Balance to deduct.			Will leave to pay.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
							190	0	0
1st year	9	10	0	6	2	0	183	18	0
2nd „	9	3	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	6	8	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	177	9	10 $\frac{3}{4}$
3rd „	8	17	6	6	14	6	170	15	4 $\frac{3}{4}$
4th „	8	10	9 $\frac{1}{4}$	7	1	2 $\frac{3}{4}$	163	14	2
5th „	8	3	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	7	8	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	156	5	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
6th „	7	16	3 $\frac{1}{2}$	7	15	8 $\frac{1}{2}$	148	10	2
7th „	7	8	6	8	3	6	140	6	8
8th „	7	0	4	8	11	8	131	15	0
9th „	6	11	9	9	0	3	122	14	9
10th „	6	2	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	9	9	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	113	5	5 $\frac{3}{4}$
11th „	5	13	3 $\frac{1}{4}$	9	18	8 $\frac{3}{4}$	106	6	9
12th „	5	3	4	10	8	8	92	18	1
13th „	4	12	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	10	19	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	81	18	11 $\frac{3}{4}$
14th „	4	1	10 $\frac{3}{4}$	11	10	1 $\frac{1}{4}$	70	8	10 $\frac{1}{2}$
15th „	3	10	5 $\frac{1}{4}$	12	1	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	58	7	3 $\frac{3}{4}$
16th „	2	18	4 $\frac{1}{4}$	12	13	7 $\frac{3}{4}$	45	13	8
17th „	2	5	8 $\frac{1}{4}$	13	6	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	32	7	4 $\frac{3}{4}$
18th „	1	12	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	13	19	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	18	7	8 $\frac{3}{4}$
19th „	0	18	4 $\frac{1}{2}$	14	13	7 $\frac{1}{2}$	3	14	1 $\frac{1}{4}$

The middle money column you will observe represents the sums to be deducted each year from the amount due to the society, and leaving out of the question altogether the idea of purchasing the house, all the moneys in that middle column stand to the member's credit, for good cottage property will always realise its full value in the market. Another view of the question is more striking still—If a man rents a house of the description I have named, at the very lowest estimate his rent will be 5s. per week, exclusive of taxes, often more; in 19 years he will have paid his landlord £247, and not one brick or one inch of

ground belongs to him ; during the same period, a member of our society has paid 6s. per week, or in 19 years £296. 8s., the difference between the two sums is £49. 8s., and that sum represents the purchase money of the house. For £247 paid to the landlord the man gets nothing ; for an additional £49. 8s. a co-operator gets a house worth £200. Truly there is nothing in our movement or out of it to equal that. But I will go further. If a man will do all his trade at his own store, he will soon by his dividend wipe out the £49. 8s., and then he has paid nothing. The society has actually made him a present of a house. Away, then, with your star tea companies, and all those concerns who give paltry presents to induce the people to bring their custom to enrich the shopkeeper. Here is a scheme fraught with many benefits, and should induce all the members in our various societies to make every effort in their power to so increase their capital that this feature of our movement may extend. It may be said it is not wise to lock up the capital of a society in buildings, but there is no danger in it, for there are many timid members who have money and do not invest all in the society. But when a building department is established, they, knowing that cottage property is a safe investment, and knowing that a man cannot run away with a house in his waistcoat pocket, bring in their surplus capital, and add it to their shares. A building department is a good thing for a society in an indirect way, for there are many, too many, members of our societies who do not make all their purchases at their store, who, if they lived in a co-operative house, would be anxious to clear it as soon as possible, and to accomplish that their very selfishness would cause them to trade all they could at their own shop to get as much "divi." as possible, and add to their weekly payments. Since I began to fight the battle of life on my own account, I have paid enough rent to buy me a house and a half, but, like the soldier, it has been "as you were." I was in the old position, nay worse, for when I began I paid a certain rent, but since that time it has been advanced 3d., then 6d., and, lastly, 1s. per week for the same house. Just at that time our building department began its operations, and, thinking it time to alter all this, I went in for a house, and am now living in a co-operative house in Co-operative-street ; to be paid for on the co-operative principle, and have



this satisfaction, that whatever I do to beautify or adorn it I am not adding to the value of another man's property, but my own; and above all, if I don't live to clear it, it will be an incentive to my sons to take it up and finish the work I have begun. But if the top stone of deliverance can be laid with rejoicing, I shall not have been a co-operator in vain, if I leave them as a legacy the example of having striven to better my condition, and as a reward a co-operative house.

I hope the subject of cottage *building*, as well as cottage purchasing, will be taken up. Much can be said in its favour. We, at Derby, intend trying the experiment of buying all our own material, and employing our members in the various trades to build the cottages, and, by doing away with the middlemen, carry the co-operative principle a step further. May we still go on, step by step, until our principles permeate every department of our social life. May co-operative cottage building and cottage purchasing increase until the numbers shall swell from tens to thousands of those who can look around their happy homes, and with commendable pride say—

I'm monarch of all I survey,
My right there's none to dispute.

Let me press this thought upon you with all the force its importance demands—leave your dividends to accumulate, increase your power for good by increasing your capital; test the movement to its full capacity. You have a power in your numbers, in the justice of your cause, in the grandeur of its object, for it is full of hope and encouragement to suffering humanity. Use that power, and the time will soon come when you shall successfully do battle with every kind of evil by which you are surrounded; the movement will receive a fresh impulse, the future will brighten before you,

And right will triumph over might,
And fill the earth with joy and gladness.

